

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
JULY 21, 2020**

**ATTENDANCE:** Maria Valle, Co-chair; M. Evette Brantley, Co-chair; Scott Burns, Jeanette Herron, Alfredo Castillo (6:49 p.m.); Council President Aidee Nieves (7:01 p.m.)

**OTHERS:** Council Member(s): Jorge Cruz, Matthew McCarthy, Ernest Newton, Maria Pereira & Denese Taylor-Moye; Bill Coleman, OPED Deputy Director; Isolina DeJesus, Director, Central Grants; Atty. Mark Anastasi, City Attorney's Office; Marie Heller, Thomas Gaudett, Mayor's Aide

This meeting was conducted by Zoom/Teleconference.  
The public was able to listen to this meeting by calling a conference line.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Co-chair Brantley called the meeting to order at 6:22 p.m. A quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES:**

**February 19, 2020 & April 21, 2020.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 19, 2020 AND APRIL 21, 2020 MEETINGS.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER VALLE SECONDED,**

**\*\* THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 19, 2020 AND APRIL 21, 2020 MEETINGS AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES:**

**June 16, 2020.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER VALLE MOVED THE MINUTES OF JUNE 16, 2020 MEETING.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS SECONDED,**

**\*\* THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE OF JUNE 16, 2020 MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**122-19 Grant Submission: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation-Long Island Sound Futures Fund- Johnson Creek (#21614).**

Mr. Coleman of OPED deferred to Ms. DeJesus who then gave a summary of the grant submission. This grant is to help fund the restoration of Johnson Creek. The living shoreline restoration portion of the project did not have a funding source. The passive boardwalk has already been allocated funding. This was an attempt on the part of City to leverage funding in order to complete the project. The City will be responsible for \$950,000 for the passive boardwalk.

Mr. Coleman spoke about how the old Mount Trashmore site was being considered for urban gardening and called Mount Grow More. He reminded everyone about the history of this area in the East End. The boardwalk portion has been allocated already. Now the National Fish and Wildlife is offering funding to restore marshlands along the shoreline. It will bring people into partnership with other groups, such as MetroCog and Save The Sound. There is no financial risk to the City.

Council Member Burns thanked Ms. DeJesus and Mr. Coleman for their information on the finances. He asked for confirmation about the funding for the boardwalk. Mr. Coleman said that the funds had already been bonded.

Council Member Burns pointed out that there was a scrap metal dealer and a parts dealer right near the boardwalk. Mr. Coleman explained that this project was planting a seed and a flag. He spoke about one of the former sites that was located right next to Knowleton Park. When the neighbor ended up leaving the area, the property was purchased and turned into a park.

Council Member Burns asked about parking. Mr. Coleman said that they did not anticipate parking and because of the flooding, did not want to pave near the creek. Most of the people that go to the park will be local residents who they think will most likely walk there. He added that the City actually owned the banks of the creek but the various companies had installed fencing down to the water. This will start opening up the waterfront.

Council Member Newton thanked the City for opening up the waterfront. He said that they never had access to the waterfront when he was growing up.

Council Member Pereira asked when the City Council had voted on this project. Mr. Coleman replied that the funding account was from 2004 and it was for waterfront projects all over the City, not just this one particular project.

Council Member Pereira said that with all the problems that the East End has such as homelessness, drug addiction, crime and a variety of other things, she did not understand why this was a priority at the cost of \$950,000 of taxpayer money or even what a “passive boardwalk” was.

Mr. Coleman said that the term “passive board walk” just indicated that it was for walking and not a basketball court.

Council Member Pereira had several questions about the \$2.7 million bond and wanted to know what the taxpayers have been paying on the interest. Mr. Coleman said that he could not speak to the financial details.

Council Member McCarthy asked for details about where the project would be starting. He always wanted to know if Malone and McBroom were doing any forward thinking involving the sheet metal place and the parts place. Mr. Coleman said that there was a Master Plan for Johnson Creek and the boardwalk along with a natural restoration plan for the entire creek. The work will only be done on the parcels that are clear right now. He reminded everyone that Malone and McBroom designed the plan for the open space but they would not be involved in potential relocating the two metal companies.

Council Member McCarthy asked what area the Master Plan covered. Mr. Coleman then provided the Committee members with the starting point and ending point for the project. He noted that the big challenge was the flooding.

Atty. Anastasi said that there had been a comment about one of the properties had a document from a former Mayor but pointed out that the Mayor does not have the authority to grant that kind of authority. Permission would have to be approved by the Council. Because of this, the property owner with the document from a former Mayor has no more rights than anyone else.

Council Member Brantley said that there had been many projects promised for the East End, but they never came to fruition. She said that this had taken so long to happen because the City has revisited the issue regularly since the issue about Mount Trashmore in the 1990's. The City made a commitment to redevelop that area. While the East End has social ills, so does every other part of the City. Now it is the East End's turn to get something off the ground. The street adjacent to Central Avenue is Revere Street. Those residents have backyards that look across the river to a mess. It is about time that the area is beautified. There were so many projects that were supposed to take place over there like the greenhouse, which never happened. Parking will not be an issue in that area. The East End residents take advantage of all their parks, particularly after the Pleasure Beach bridge burned. She asked the Committee to support this measure.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER VALLE MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 122-19 GRANT SUBMISSION: NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION-LONG ISLAND SOUND FUTURES FUND- JOHNSON CREEK (#21614).**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**123-19 Grant Submission: Southwestern Connecticut Agency on Aging (SWCAA) – Title III Funding Older Americans Act Grant Program- Bridgeport Senior Center Recreational Activities Program (#21533).**

Ms. DeJesus said that she would give the overview and Ms. Heller would answer specific questions. Ms. DeJesus said that this was the third year that they had applied for funding. Last year, they received \$24,000. There is a match requirement, but it is covered by in-kind services.

*Council Member Castillo joined the meeting at 6:49 p.m.*

Council Member Burns asked if all the seniors had access or if it geared towards a specific center. Ms. Heller said that it was for all the seniors and the programs would be available to all.

Council Member Pereira said that this was checked off as a new grant on the summary. Ms. DeJesus said it was a new application.

Council Member Pereira asked if the senior centers were allowed to be open. Ms. Heller said that they were closed but hoped to open in the fall under Phase 3.

Council Member Pereira said that 62% of COVID deaths involved seniors. She said that she had placed flyers under the doors of her seniors warning them to only go to doctor's appointments and to avoid bus trips. She did not think the senior centers should be opened at all.

Ms. Heller said that the funding was given for October 1st through September 30th 2021. Ms. DeJesus said that they were just trying to ensure that the funding was there when they are allowed to open up the centers.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER VALLE MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 123-19 GRANT SUBMISSION: SOUTHWESTERN CONNECTICUT AGENCY ON AGING (SWCAA) – TITLE III FUNDING OLDER AMERICANS ACT GRANT PROGRAM-BRIDGEPORT SENIOR CENTER RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAM (#21533).**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**124-19 Grant Submission: Southwestern Connecticut Agency on Aging (SWCAA) – Title III Funding Older Americans Act Grant Program – Elderly Hispanic Program (#21270).**

Ms. DeJesus said that she would give the introduction, but Ms. Gaines was not present to answer questions. This grant program has been in place for many years.

Council Member Valle said that she understood that the senior centers were not open and everyone was waiting for the Governor's permission to open up. She said that Ms. Heller, the Director of the Eisenhower Center, was doing an excellent job in keeping the seniors connected.

Council Member Herron said that she agreed with Council Member Valle and there were a number of Hispanic residents who benefited. The City can't afford to not apply for grants because of COVID-19.

Council Member Pereira said that this was checked off as a new grant on the summary. She said that it mentions about one on one referrals but repeated her concerns about any group assemblies of seniors due to the 62% COVID-19 death rate among the elderly.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER VALLE MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 124-19 GRANT SUBMISSION: SOUTHWESTERN CONNECTICUT AGENCY ON AGING (SWCAA) – TITLE III FUNDING OLDER AMERICANS ACT GRANT PROGRAM – ELDERLY HISPANIC PROGRAM (#21270).**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

*Council President Nieves joined the meeting at 7:01 p.m.*

**125-19 Grant Submission: CT Department of Agriculture – FY2020 Farm Viability Grant.**

Ms. DeJesus, said that High Ridge Hydroponics was not eligible to submit the application for a micro green hydroponics container to be placed on Bridgeport Hospital property. She said that High Ridge Hydroponics people would be responsible for the container.

Mr. Coleman explained that this was part of the Mount Grow More project and described where the micro greens container would be located.

Council Member Burns said that he had seen this done in other locations. He asked how these would be sold and whether or not the community would have access.

Council Member Newton said that they had been talking about creating jobs for young people. He mentioned Ms. Simms project for growing vegetables. There are hospitals and stores right there in the community. This would be very positive for the community. UConn is a credible group and he felt it was a win/win. The East End would be able to change from a food desert to an active community.

Council Member Pereira said that she did not understand because the grant just pays for the hydroponics container. Mr. Coleman confirmed that the grant funding was just for the container. Council Member Pereira said that there was no budget contained in the packet.

Council Member Pereira asked why this was happening on City property. Mr. Coleman explained that the property was privately owned.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON/MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 125-19 GRANT SUBMISSION: CT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE – FY2020 FARM VIABILITY GRANT.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER VALLE SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**129-19 Proposed Resolution declaring racism as a Public Health Crisis in Bridgeport.**

Council Member Cruz said he wanted to thank his co-sponsors for supporting this resolution. He then read the following into the record:

**WHEREAS**, racism is a social system with multiple dimensions: individual racism that is interpersonal and/or internalized or systemic racism that is institutional or structured, and is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on social interpretation of how one looks; and

**WHEREAS**, race is a social construct with no biological basis; and

**WHEREAS**, racism unfairly disadvantages specific individuals and communities, while unfairly giving advantage to other individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources; and

**WHEREAS**, racism is a root cause of poverty and constricts economic mobility; and

**WHEREAS**, racism caused persistent discrimination and disparate outcomes in many areas of life, including housing, education, employment, and criminal justice, and is itself a social determinant of health; and

**WHEREAS**, Black, Native American, Asian and Latino residents are more likely to experience poor health outcomes as a consequence of any inequities in economic stability, education, physical environment, food, and access to healthcare and these inequities are, themselves, a result of racism; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States Office of Disease Prevention recognizes that discrimination negatively impacts health outcomes and more than 100 studies have linked racism to worse health outcomes; and

**WHEREAS**, specific physical and behavioral health conditions stemming from racism include depression, anxiety, anger, hypertension, stroke, heart attack, diabetes, maternal death, premature birth, respiratory diseases, and autoimmune diseases; and

**WHEREAS** racism has given rise to geographic segregation that disproportionately exposes people of color to lead poisoning, poor air quality, inadequate nutrition, and under N resource recreational and health care facilities; and

**WHEREAS**, racism and segregation have exacerbated a health divide resulting in people of color in Connecticut bearing a disproportionate burden of illness and mortality including COVID -19 infections and death, heart disease, diabetes, and infant mortality; and

**WHEREAS**, helping people process the trauma of past injustice and create new narratives based on equity, fairness, and equal justice can have healing effects, both mentally and physically,

**WHEREAS**, the collective prosperity and well-being of Bridgeport depends upon equitable access to opportunity for every resident regardless of their color or their skin; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the City Council of Bridgeport asserts that racism is a public health crisis affecting our city and all of Connecticut; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the City of Bridgeport will work to progress as an equity and justice oriented organization, by continuing to identify specific activities to enhance diversity and to ensure anti-racism principles across our leadership, staffing and contracting; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the City of Bridgeport will promote equity through all policies approved by the City Council of Bridgeport and enhance educational efforts aimed at understanding, addressing and dismantling racism and how it affects the delivery of human and social services, economic development and public safety; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, but the City of Bridgeport will improve the quality of the data our city collects and analyzes by using qualitative and quantitative data to assess in equities in impact and to enable continuously improvement; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the City of Bridgeport will continue to advocate locally for relevant policies that improve health and communities of color, and support local, state, regional and federal initiatives that advance efforts to dismantle systemic racism;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the City of Bridgeport will also work to solidify alliances and partnerships with other organizations that are confronting racism and encourage other local, state, regional, and national entities to recognize racism as a public health crisis; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the City of Bridgeport will support community efforts to amplify issues of racism and engage actively and authentically with communities of color wherever they live; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the City of Bridgeport will identify clear goals and objectives, including periodic reports to the City Council of Bridgeport, to assess progress and capitalize on opportunities to further advance racial equity.

Council Member Newton thanked Council Member Cruz for bringing this before the City Council. Many of the neighboring cities and towns have already done this. Many black and brown people died because they could not get the health care due to the discriminatory, racist practices.

Council Member Pereira said that the second therefore, speaks about the City of Bridgeport promoting equity through all policies. She said that she hoped that they would stand by that. Regarding the statement “enhance educational efforts aimed at understanding, addressing and dismantling racism and how it affects the delivery of human and social services”, Council Member Pereira also said that due to the insistence by a Board of Education member, every child in the Bridgeport Public Schools takes a semester of African American, Caribbean or Latin American studies in order to graduate. So, this process has been already been started.

Council Member Pereira asked about the statement “the City of Bridgeport will improve the quality of the data our city collects and analyzes by using qualitative and quantitative data to assess in equities in impact and to enable continuously improvement” and asked what data they would collect to see how race affects different aspects, such as traffic stops, who was being suspended in schools, SROs in the schools, COVID-19 testing, who has the access to the results.

Council Member Brantley said that the City's intention to make sure that children are taught black and Hispanic history in the schools, making sure the senior residents have protective equipment. She said that it would be important to be kinder to people. This will not happen overnight. They need to connect with their constituents, with the Council Members.

Council Member Pereira said that the last part of the resolve [inaudible] Council Member Brantley said that this was something that would not happen overnight.

Council Member Burns said that he wanted to make sure of what the goals were moving forward. He asked how they would incorporate the administration's practices. Council Member Brantley said that it would take some work and some time.

Council President Nieves said that the resolution goes hand in hand with 131-19, which was referred to the Ordinance Committee. She said that she had discussed this with the Mayor about race equity. Council President Nieves is also working with Atty. Skyers to develop a way that the City would have a race equity lens. The ordinance part of delving into equity will look at Baltimore and Seattle. Seattle created a Race Equity Ordinance These things will be addressed along with a health pandemic.

Council Member Pereira asked whether the City Council would receive periodic reports on all the reports and data that would be created by the resolution. She also wanted to know if they would be codified in the ordinance.

Council President Nieves said that the ordinance addresses the programs and policy decisions along with collecting the data. The Race Equity Assistance Fund will address a large scope but could be curtailed if necessary, and a city in California took \$200,000 out of the general fund for training to ensure that they no longer operated the implicit bias lens. She said that they would be studying how people come in to apply for certificates or permits.

Council Member Brantley said that the zoning department is of interest because toxic businesses were located in black and brown neighborhoods.

Council Member Newton said that the police were a good start, but there were people who were there for a long time and set in their ways. The Health Director can get studies from all over the nation that would provide the data. The problem will be making sure that they implement the policies and procedures.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 129-19 PROPOSED RESOLUTION DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS IN BRIDGEPORT.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**



## **ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER VALLE SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services